

Piece by Piece

by HogwartsHoney

A response to the Broken Memory Charm Challenge at LiveJournal's grangersnape100. A series of 24 100-word drabbles.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Jo Rowling owns the characters. The plot is mine.

A/N: This series is inspired by the song "Piece By Piece" by Katie Melua. It's unbeta'd, so all mistakes are mine. End of Book 6 disregarded.

Broken Memory Charm Challenge: must include SS/HG and a memory charm, Obliviate, or misfired memory magic that may have gone wrong.

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1

He knew that curse.

As the light faded, he closed his eyes.

He knew that curse.

The curse invoked very powerful magic and was created by the twisted brilliance of the Dark Lord himself. It was a bastardization of a memory charm, but infinitely worse.

A broken-memory curse, one that would destroy each memory as it was remembered, so that the victim could remember it once, and only once, before it was broken, split, shattered for all eternity.

Yes, Severus Snape knew that curse, and as he looked down at the victim, his gut turned to ice.

Hermione. *His* Hermione.

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2

She opened her eyes and stared at him, panicked in the first moment, serene in the next.

'Severus.'

'Don't say anything, my love. Don't think; just let me get you back.'

'Get me back where?'

Severus cringed, desperately searching his mind for answers while hoping to stem the flow of destruction. He looked down into her beautiful, trusting brown eyes.

'Finite Incantatem.'

He had known that it was a shot in the dark, but his failure was doubly difficult to bear. He searched further, mentally examining and then discarding various hexes, spells and incantations.

'Severus, what's happened? I remember...'

'Stupefy.'

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3

Severus brought his unconscious Hermione into their bedroom and laid her gently on their bed. He ran his fingers through her wild hair, spreading the strands across the pillows until she bore a resemblance to an ethereal being, a Muggle angel.

He still couldn't come to terms with the fact that he was losing her, and that he would continue to lose her. The brightest witch of any age, his former student, his *wife*, was slipping from him, slipping away like water through his cupped hands.

The Dark Lord had been as cruel in death as he was in life.

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4

With Severus' help, Potter had succeeded in defeating the evil that was Tom Riddle, but there had been significant destruction in the course of that battle. The remaining Death Eaters were stunned by their Master's demise, and their resulting confusion enabled their easy capture by the Ministry's Aurors who swept through the battlefield like avenging angels.

Potter stood amid the destruction and stared ...*stared* at the body of his best friend, as Weasley lay crumpled at his feet. Harry's green eyes reflected the anguish of his loss.

To Severus, his own wife's intellectual loss was so much harder to bear.

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5

'Rennervate.'

Hermione's eyes flickered open and she looked around, hastily checking her whereabouts. She met Severus' gaze and her eyes spoke volumes. Trust. Love. Unwavering loyalty.

He closed his eyes, unwilling to even ponder the implications of his life from this point onwards. The loss was too great.

'Severus, what happened?

'Potter defeated the Dark Lord, Hermione. It's over.'

He could see Hermione's concentration as she tried to piece together the day's events. Her face screwed up with the effort, and she turned to him.

'What did Voldemort hit me with? I can't remember...'

'DON'T!'

'Severus, why can't I ...'

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6

Her words shattered him. Already he was losing her; already the curse was stripping away all that was worthwhile in his life.

'Hermione, it's a memory curse.'

'Obviously it's more than that, Severus. Tell me.'

He caressed her face, her cheeks, ran his fingers over her lips, eyelashes, eyebrows, and into her hair. He pulled her to his chest, holding her fiercely against him as though by his will alone he could reverse the travesty done to them both.

It was not enough; he was not strong enough to stop it, to protect her, to save her.

To save *THEM*.

=====///=====

7

Severus explained to Hermione the gist of the curse.

'Will I remember nothing?' Her voice shook, and she pleaded with her eyes for some absolution, some miracle.

He knew that there was none.

'Eventually, yes.'

The silence was deafening to his ears and the rush of his blood pumping in his ears was almost intolerable.

'I can't remember the battle, Severus, any of it.'

'That might be due to the exertions of the day, Hermione.'

He shuddered at what he was about to do, but he had to start somewhere.

Do you remember the first day you came to Hogwarts?'

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8

Hermione smiled, and his heart sank. He knew that her joy would be short-lived, but still he wanted her to feel it again, one last time.

'Oh, yes, I do! I was so nervous on the train and almost terrified of Hagrid! We took the boats across the lake and the castle was so beautiful!'

Her eyes shone with the memory, and her face was lit with pure joy for a moment; then, as quickly as it had come, her eyes glazed over, and her smile faded.

His stomach lurched as he recognised the signs.

The memory was gone.

Forever.

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9

'Severus, what were we talking about?'

'Nothing, my love.'

'Severus.'

He lay down on the bed and pulled her down beside him. He heard her little huff of frustration, but all he wanted was his wife beside him.

Although he was exhausted, physically battered by the fighting earlier that day and mentally drained with worry, still he strove for a solution to their problem. No potion in the world would fix this; no spell that he knew of could reverse the steady annihilation of everything in her past, everything in her future.

Their future, for he was nothing without her.

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10

He listened to Hermione's steady breathing and continued to torture himself with thoughts of what she would lose, what he would lose. Eventually she wouldn't remember him or their relationship, would forget their first kiss, their wedding day, their promises to each other, whispered in the darkness, their passion, her friends, her family, her vast knowledge, her history, her life.

Severus Snape closed his eyes against the travesty that was their fate and yearned for a sleep that would not come.

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11

'Severus, remember with me.'

'What?'

Her voice was surprisingly steady as she held out her hand to him.

'Severus, if I am to forget everything, I want to at least remember it with you the last time.'

He took her hand as he sat beside her on the couch and she snuggled into his shoulder. He wrapped his arm around her protectively as if that would somehow stem the flow of damage or keep them any safer. His heart ached for her, for them, for him.

'Very well, what memory?'

'Our first kiss.'

Severus Snape thought his heart would break.

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12

"Piece by piece is how I'll let go of you,

*Kiss by kiss will leave my mind, one at a time."*Katie Melua

Hermione and Severus sat together for days, reminiscing together and weeping as she bade farewell to some of their earliest memories. Severus felt that she should try to remember unimportant things first so that they could hold onto their cherished memories as long as possible.

Whenever Hermione slept, he spent every moment in his library, searching through his countless books on Dark Magic, for although he knew that the curse was of Voldemort's own making, it was still based upon the simple Obliviate charm. The Healers at St. Mungo's were still at a loss about the possibility of spell reversal.

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13

Severus was dozing, his head lying among the open books on his desk when the door to his study burst open. His years of training resulted in him standing behind the

desk with his wand drawn before he came fully awake.

'Severus!'

His wife stood in the doorway, breathing heavily. Excitement flooded her face, and she barely noticed his drawn wand.

'Hermione?'

'Legilemency, Severus. Read my mind!'

His blood ran cold as he fully understood those words. He could preserve her thoughts and her memories within his own mind.

For the first time in days, Severus Snape dared to hope.

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14

Severus touched the wand to his temple and concentrated on Hermione's latest memory. Her memories must be kept separate from his, and the Pensieve was the only way to truly preserve their integrity.

The idea of the Pensieve came to him late one night as he sat in his study, fighting the feelings of being overwhelmed.

Dumbledore's Pensieve had passed to Potter upon the Headmaster's death at Voldemort's hands, and as Severus ran his fingers around the runes and symbols carved around the edge of the stone basin, he felt a strong connection to its previous owner.

'Albus, help me.'

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15

'Concentrate, dear boy.'

He knew intellectually that the voice came from within his own mind, but he couldn't escape the feeling that somehow Dumbledore was with him.

He felt his resolve break as the walls of his mind began to crumble, and he gripped the edge of the Pensieve. The silvery light illuminated his shaking hands and the shimmering threads of memories already in the basin swirled with a life of their own.

'Albus, *help me.*'

He was slipping.

The constant strain of worry and the barrage of Hermione's memories upon his own were tearing him down.

He was breaking.

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16

'Excuse me, sir.'

Severus barely heard the words as he clung to the Pensieve, but he sensed someone at the door. He turned towards his wife, still beautiful, but a shell of herself as her memories were destroyed.

'Yes?' *My love, but he could no longer call her that, for she no longer knew him as her husband.*

'Professor, I'm supposed to meet with you today?'

'Yes, Miss Granger, we have to go over your training.'

'Training, sir?'

'In Legilimency, Miss Granger. With your permission, I will enter your mind.'

'As you wish, sir.'

He turned to her and began.

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17

'Severus, perhaps we have a solution.'

Snape raised his head, the dark circles under his eyes betraying his lack of sleep.

'Solution, Minerva? I highly doubt that, if I have not found a solution, you would have been able to.'

'I shall excuse your rudeness due to your situation, but you will *NOT* take that tone with me, Severus Snape.'

Minerva's tone was as sharp as he had ever heard it, and they turned as Hermione entered the room. Minerva glanced at Severus for a moment and then extended her hand to Hermione.

'My dear, won't you have a seat?'

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18

Hermione's face was devoid of emotion and Minerva shuddered.

'I don't understand, Minerva. What solution could you have found?'

Minerva looked from Hermione to Severus, the strain on his face unmasked.

'A simple Restituo charm, Severus.'

'There's nothing simple about Restituo, Minerva; we both know that.'

'Severus, it's all we have.'

'Why not Reverso?'

'It doesn't repair.'

'It's less dangerous.'

'Severus ...'

'Minerva, I would rather have half of her than none at all.'

'Let's ask her then, shall we?'

'She doesn't know you. She doesn't even know me.'

The pain in his voice was unmistakable.

'She knows enough, Severus.'

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19

Minerva knelt beside Hermione's chair and looked into the girl's impassive face. Her heart sank at the sight of her former student, now a shadow of her former self, reduced to existing, barely alive.

'Hermione, I need to ask you something.'

'Hermione. Is that my name?'

For a moment, Severus thought that Minerva would be too shocked to continue, but he saw her swallow and continue.

'Yes, that's you. We may be able to help you, but I need to ask you something.'

'Okay.'

Minerva glanced anxiously at Severus once more before she posed the question to the young woman.

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20

'There are two spells. One is very dangerous but could reverse the damage caused by the curse you're under. The other is not as dangerous, but it's also not as effective. Which would you prefer we use?'

Hermione's confusion was apparent, and for a moment Severus was afraid that she would panic and leave. Instead, the Gryffindor met Minerva's gaze squarely.

'Fix me,' she said in a tiny voice. 'Whatever it takes, *please fix me.*'

Her pleading eyes searched Severus' own and he understood. The Hermione he knew and loved would risk everything, and he couldn't deny her the chance.

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21

Severus and Hermione stood in his potions room and regarded the lines of bottles along one wall. Shimmering, silvery threads swirled in individual bottles, each labelled with the date and content of each of Hermione's memories.

She ran her fingertips along them as she walked through the room, and he fervently hoped that they would someday be more than just memories in a bottle, viewable through a Pensieve.

He hoped that they would be hers again.

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22

Severus, Hermione and Minerva stood in the Room of Requirement, and Severus guided his wife to a soft armchair, into which she sank without a word.

'Shall we begin?' Minerva's voice shook imperceptibly, and Severus placed a steady hand upon her shoulder.

'I will cast the spell, Minerva. Watch her for the signs.'

Minerva nodded and moved away from Severus. He gazed once more at Hermione who stared back at him impassively, and he closed his eyes as he summoned the Dark magic within him.

He felt a chilling pull as the magic took hold and he cast the spell.

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23

The force of the spell sapped Severus' strength, and he fell to his knees, gasping and clutching his chest. Minerva started to move towards him, but he raised a staying hand and staggered to his feet.

Shakily he made his way towards Hermione's chair and knelt at her feet, gazing up into her eyes. He hardly dared to breathe as he waited for a sign, a flicker of recognition in her chocolate eyes.

She raised her eyes to meet his and he waited.

Time passed slowly.

She smiled.

He breathed for what felt like the first time in years.

'Husband.'

=====

24

Severus Snape wept.

Huge, wracking sobs threatened to tear him apart as he lowered his head into her lap. Hermione ran her hands gently through his hair as she murmured his name over and over.

Minerva stood, dumbstruck in disbelief and relief. She hugged them both before leaving the room, but neither of the Snapes noticed her.

He knew that the spell had worked, but the full extent of its efficacy could only be measured by her memories.

Time would tell.

Piece by piece he would show her what she'd missed.

Piece by piece they would rebuild their lives together.

~fin~

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A/N: restituo : restore, put back, replace, reinstate, repair.

revert : to go back, return, revert.

source: <http://www.sunsite.ubc.ca>